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ABSTRACT

Investigates changes of the student population with academic difficulty at the College of the Canyons. More specifically, this fall 2002 study investigates trends of the student population with academic difficulty over time, demographic changes of the population over time, and the impacts of an academic intervention workshop. Outlines the College's rules and regulations for academic probation and dismissal as well at the process for student reinstatement. Results from the study indicated higher proportions of nonwhite students in most categories of the academic difficulty population. Also, males had higher percentages in academic probation and dismissal, while females had higher percentages in progress probation and dismissal. The total number of academic dismissals at College of the Canyons decreased by 221 students (57 percent) from fall 2001, and 119 students (41 percent) from spring 2002. Those students who attended the academic retention workshops had higher success rates than those students on probation that did not attend. Recommendations emphasize the effectiveness of the academic retention workshops and suggest that the college require workshop attendance by all students on academic probation. Also recommends that the college focus resources on those students at higher risk. (JS)

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Institutional Development and Technology

Academic Standing and Students in Academic Difficulty - Fall 2002

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Academic Standing and Students in Academic Difficulty In Fall 2002

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the changes in the population of students in academic difficulty, including changes as a result of newly implemented policies and programs.

Analyses highlighted the following trends:

- Academic dismissals decreased by 221 (57 %) from Fall 2001, and 119 (41 %) from Spring 2002.
- Progress dismissals decreased by 12 (67 %) from Fall 2001, and 7 (54 %) from Spring 2002.
- Academic CPR Workshops were the most common reason for change in standing (194 in Spring 2002), followed by counselor action (141), term override for GPA of 2.25 in subsequent semester (79), sitting out at for at least one semester (63), and term override for 75% completion in subsequent semester (26).
- 6.8 percent of all African-American students were on academic probation, compared to 4.6 percent of Hispanic students and 3.9 percent of White students.
- 4.5 percent of male students were on academic probation compared to 3.7 percent of females.
- 1.4 percent of female students were on progress probation compared to 1.2 percent of males.
- Workshop attendees had a 50.0 percent success rate compared to 39.6 percent of students in academic difficulty that did not attend a workshop.

Rules for probation and dismissal:

- Students are placed on probation if their GPA falls below 2.0, or they fail to complete 50 percent of their classes. Students on probation receive notification in the mail, which includes information on resources available to them, such as the Tutorial/Learning/Computer (TLC) lab.
- Students are subject to dismissal (STD) after two consecutive semesters on probation. These students are again notified regarding their status and reminded of the resources available to them. In addition, they are notified that they MUST attend an Academic CPR Workshop. These workshops are held several times a semester.
- Students are dismissed after three consecutive semesters of probation.
- A student who has been dismissed may request reinstatement after one semester has elapsed. Multiple dismissals may require a longer period of absence. Dismissed students may appeal to a counselor to be reinstated without a break in semesters.

Recommendations:

- Require workshop attendance or other intervention for all students on probation.
- Focus resources on students at highest risk.
- Add a field to Datatel for the actual date of the workshop (or the other reason for change in standing), or standardize procedure for date entry in current fields.
- Capture full FTES (full-time equivalent student) for workshops and other interventions, where applicable.

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- Ms. Kathleen Curtis, Institutional Development and Technology, for expert editing, graphics and layout design.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the changes in the population of students in academic difficulty, including changes as a result of newly implemented policies.

The Matriculation Director requested the study be completed in three parts.

1. To study the changes in the academic standings of students in academic difficulty over time. To study the demographic makeup of these categories. In addition, examine the efficacy of the recently enacted workshop intervention on this population disaggregated by academic standing.
2. To conduct interviews with some of the students who took the workshop in Summer 2002 in order to gather qualitative evidence of the personal impact of these workshops.
3. To set up a system to longitudinally track students in academic difficulty. This tracking system will follow cohorts in order to see what happens to them, academically, from initial flagging onward. How are the demographics changing within the categories? Are there fluctuations and patterns in the numbers of students?

This report addresses the first segment which looks at the changes in the categories of student standing, ethnicity and gender for these categories, and compares the retention and success rates in Fall 2002 of students who attended an Academic CPR Workshop in Summer 2002 with students on probation and students subject to dismissal (STD) who did not attend a workshop.

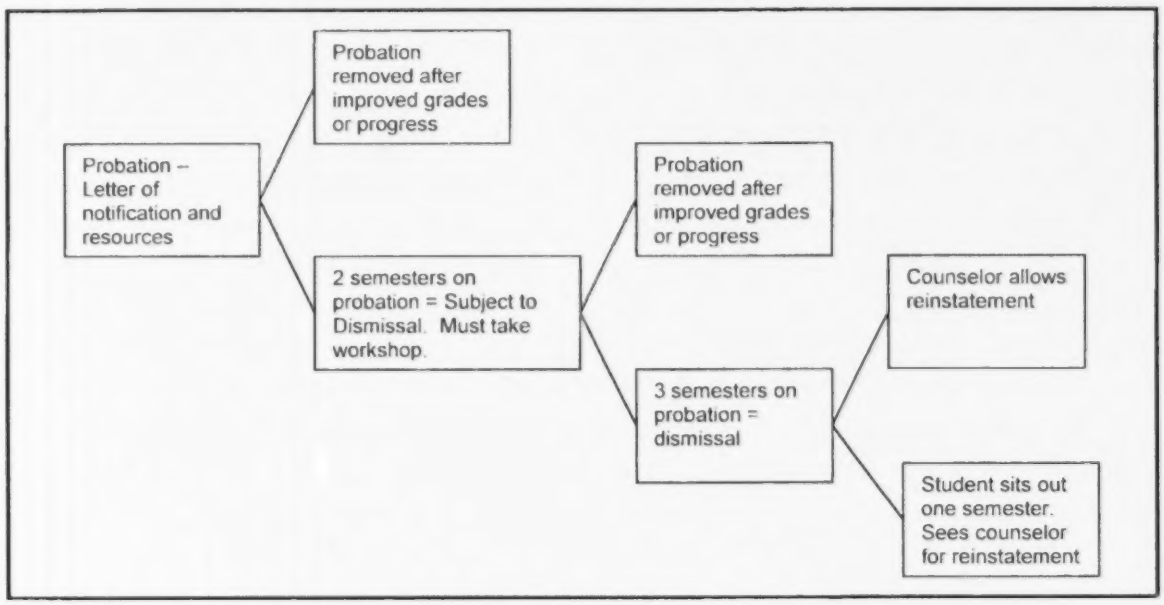
In Fall 2001, the Matriculation Director began setting up the tracking system by utilizing the full set of 18 categories provided by Datatel (the database system utilized by the College), as well as two new categories special to the College. Prior to this, analyses were limited to eight categories, with active use of only two. In Spring 2002, Dr. Maple enacted a rigid enforcement of academic and progress rules. Beginning with Spring 2002, data were available that reflected the new categories as well as universal enforcement of academic and progress rules. Prototype workshops were given in Fall 2001, but were not finalized until Spring 2002.

Figure 1 gives the sequence of events for students in academic difficulty. The 2002-2003 catalogue explains the rules regarding probation and dismissal:

- Students are placed on probation if their GPA falls below 2.0, or they fail to complete 50 percent of their classes. Students on probation receive notification in the mail, which includes information on resources available to them, such as the Tutorial/Learning/Computer (TLC) lab.

- Students are subject to dismissal (STD) after two consecutive semesters on probation. These students are again notified regarding their status and reminded of the resources available to them. In addition, they are notified that they MUST attend an Academic CPR Workshop. These workshops are held several times each semester.
- Students are dismissed after three consecutive semesters of probation.
- A student who has been dismissed may request reinstatement after one semester has elapsed. Multiple dismissals may require a longer period of absence. Dismissed students may appeal to a counselor to be reinstated without a break in semesters.

Figure 1: Sequence of Events for Students in Academic Difficulty


Probation removed after improved grades or progress
Probation – Letter of notification and resources
Probation removed after improved grades or progress
2 semesters on probation = Subject to Dismissal. Must take workshop.
Counselor allows reinstatement
3 semesters on probation = dismissal
Student sits out one semester. Sees counselor for reinstatement

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Methods

The information utilized in this study originates from several sources. The data file of students who signed up for the workshops comes from an on-line sign-up form which feeds an Access database (PASW.mdb).

The names of students who signed up for the workshop were entered into SPSS (a statistical program) and merged with their academic standing data from Datatel and enrollment data from the Chancellor's Office referential files. A specialized Datatel query was implemented to aggregate the information used in the SACS (Student Academic Standings) FrontView screen.

Datatel does not have a field for the actual date of the workshop or other intervention. The field sts.acad.standing.date contains the date that the information was posted to the student's records, but not the actual date of the reason for a change in status. The date of the workshop is usually typed in the text field entitled sts.override.reason, but since there is no standard procedure for entering the date, it is a time consuming process to pull the actual attendance dates of the workshop from this field. Furthermore, if the College is receiving FTES (full-time equivalent student) funding for these workshops, there would be a separate section number assigned (under General Studies, for example), which would greatly facilitate analysis.

Retention is calculated using the RP Group's formula:

Numerator
Number of students (duplicated) with A, B, C, D, F, FW, CR, NC, I

Denominator
Number of students (duplicated) with A, B, C, D, F, FW, CR, NC, W, I

Success is calculated using the RP Group's formula:

Numerator
Number of students (duplicated) with A, B, C, CR

Denominator
Number of students (duplicated) with A, B, C, D, F, FW, CR, NC, W, I

Major Findings

Changes in Academic Standings over Time

Table 1 shows the changes in academic standing over three semesters. In Fall 2002, academic dismissals decreased by 221 (57%) from Fall 2001, and 119 (41%) over Spring 2002. Likewise, progress dismissals decreased by 12 (67%) over Fall 2001, and 7 (54%) over Spring 2002.

Table 1: Modified Academic Standing (sts.acad.standing)

Academic Standing	Fall 2001		Spring 2002		Fall 2002	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Academic Probation	571	4.1	653	4.4	586	4.0
Academic Subj to Dism	297	2.1	160	1.1	419	2.8
Academic Dismissal	391	2.8	289	2	170	1.2
Good Standing	6771	48.1	7012	47.3	7605	51.6
Met req/allowed to reg	216	1.5	326	2.2	31	0.2
No Standing < 12.0 units	5479	38.9	5918	39.9	5497	37.3
Progress Probation	172	1.2	180	1.2	196	1.3
Acad & Prog Probation	2	0.0	7	0	2	0.0
Prog Prob & Acad STD	8	0.1	8	0.1	8	0.1
Prog Prob & Acad Dism	2	0.0	4	0	2	0.0
Progress Subj Dism	67	0.5	38	0.3	63	0.4
Prog STD & Acad Prob	10	0.1	3	0	8	0.1
Academic & Progress STD	4	0.0	2	0	5	0.0
Prog STD & Acad Dism	7	0.0	8	0.1	4	0.0
Progress Dismissal	18	0.1	13	0.1	6	0.0
Prog Dismissal & Acad STD	5	0.0	6	0	1	0.0
Academic & Progress Dism	7	0.0	4	0	2	0.0
Re-admitted STD	40	0.3	188	1.3	133	0.9
Total	14067	100.0	14819	100.0	14738	100.0

Caution should be used when interpreting the category Academic-Subject to dismissal. The changes from Fall 2001 to Fall 2002 do not accurately reflect the same population. The numbers of students subject to dismissal do not necessarily carry forward from the previous semester. For example, this number indicates students who had stayed out for one or more semesters and were still subject to dismissal when they returned to COC. People can stay out for years but will carry the same standing when they return. Furthermore, the change in numbers may represent changes in categories, discussed above, as well as other artifacts of the new program. The only way to estimate the connection between semesters is to freeze and track the population. This tracking system is in the development stage.

In the same way, the changes over the three semesters for students who met requirements and were allowed to register (shown in line 5) do not accurately reflect the number of students who completed the workshop, or attained the necessary GPA or progress improvement to release them from probation or STD status in the semester reported. These issues will be dealt with in the development of the tracking system.

Table 2 reports the reasons used to make changes in academic standing, as reflected in the left side of the Student Academic Standing (SACS) screen. Although they are disaggregated by semester, care should be taken in comparing semesters within Table 2, or between this table and the preceding tables. For example, workshops and counselor interviews were dated in the semester for which they took place, not by the semester for which they applied to the change in status. In other words, although Fall 2002 shows no workshops, the workshops attended during the Spring and Summer semester were used in changes in Fall 2002.

Table 2: Interventions and Other Reasons for Modification of Academic Standing

Reason for Status Change	Fall 2001			Spring 2002			Fall 2002		
	N	%	Net %	N	%	Net %	N	%	Net %
Counselor	77	0.5%	23.3%	141	1.0%	27.7%	77	0.5%	34.8%
Petition	20	0.1%	6.0%	2	0.0%	0.4%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Sat out	20	0.1%	6.0%	63	0.4%	12.4%	4	0.0%	1.8%
Term override 2.25	44	0.3%	13.3%	79	0.5%	15.5%	112	0.8%	50.7%
Term override 75%	33	0.2%	10.0%	26	0.2%	5.1%	25	0.2%	11.3%
Workshop	136	1.0%	41.1%	194	1.3%	38.1%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1	0.0%	0.3%	4	0.0%	0.8%	3	0.0%	1.4%
Subtotal	331	2.4%	100.0%	509	3.4%	100.0%	221	1.5%	100.0%
NAP-Courses dropped	870	6.2%		812	5.5%		735	6.2%	
NAP-Not applicable	12864	91.4%		13498	91.1%		13788	91.4%	
Total	14065	100.0%		14819	100.0%		14744	99.1%	

In examining Spring 2002 in Table 2, academic workshops lead the interventions and other reasons for change (194), followed by counselor action (141), term override for GPA of 2.25 in subsequent semester (77), sitting out at for at least one semester (63), and term override for 75% completion in subsequent semester (26).

These changes seem to be due primarily to three reasons: the new system of categories discussed previously, enforcement of matriculation rules, and interventions such as workshops. As discussed above, beginning in Fall 2001, new categories for academic standing were implemented in Datatel. This formed the informational infrastructure that will be used to study, track, and treat disparate populations in academic difficulty.

In addition, beginning in Spring 2002, probation and dismissal rules were more systematically enforced. Students who qualified for the various categories received the appropriate action from the college. Furthermore, interventions were enacted to assist these students in removing themselves from progress and academic probation and dismissal. These included the following: letters to qualifying students explaining why they were re-classified and how to remedy it; academic workshops held every semester; and counselor judgment based on interviews and other criteria.

Demographic Composition of Academic Standings

The following four tables show the demographic breakdown of student's academic standing for Fall 2002. Tables are provided for count as well as percent. Figures for the percent tables should be compared across. However, the reader should note that while percentages are interesting in comparing across categories, the count should be taken into consideration during analysis. Percentages may appear unusually high due to the small number of students involved.

Referring to Tables 3 & 4, notice that ethnicity suggests moderate impact on academic standing for all categories of probation, subject to dismissal, and students who were dismissed. Table 4 reports that 6.8 percent of all African American students were on academic probation, compared to 4.6 percent of Latino students and 3.9 percent of White students.

Table 3: Ethnic Background (by count)

	Ethnic Background						
	African-American	Latino	White	Other	Missing/ Decline to State	Did not Attend Fall 2002	Total
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Academic Probation	37	120	284	76	31	38	586
Academic Subj to Dism	22	115	200	65	14	3	419
Academic Dismissal	4	41	88	23	12	2	170
Good Standing	221	1262	4060	1174	454	434	7605
Met req/allowed to reg	1	2	6	3	1	18	31
No Standing < 12.0 units	233	950	2468	600	499	747	5497
Progress Probation	15	38	82	25	9	27	196
Acad & Prog Probation	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Prog Prob & Acad STD	0	2	4	1	0	1	8
Prog Prob & Acad Dism	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Progress Subj Dism	3	19	28	9	2	2	63
Prog STD & Acad Prob	1	1	3	3	0	0	8
Academic & Progress STD	0	1	3	1	0	0	5
Prog STD & Acad Dism	0	1	2	0	0	1	4
Progress Dismissal	0	1	5	0	0	0	6
Prog Dismissal & Acad STD	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Academic & Progress Dism	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Re-admitted STD	2	30	64	12	8	17	133
Total	541	2585	7299	1992	1031	1290	14738

Table 4: Ethnic Background (by percentage)

	Ethnic Background						
	African-American	Latino	White	Other	Missing/ Decline to State	Did not Attend Fall 2002	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Academic Probation	6.8%	4.6%	3.9%	3.8%	3.0%	2.9%	4.0%
Academic Subj to Dism	4.1%	4.4%	2.7%	3.3%	1.4%	0.2%	2.8%
Academic Dismissal	0.7%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	0.2%	1.2%
Good Standing	40.9%	48.8%	55.6%	58.9%	44.0%	33.6%	51.6%
Met req/allowed to reg	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	1.4%	0.2%
No Standing < 12.0 units	43.1%	36.8%	33.8%	30.1%	48.4%	57.9%	37.3%
Progress Probation	2.8%	1.5%	1.1%	1.3%	0.9%	2.1%	1.3%
Acad & Prog Probation	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prog Prob & Acad STD	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Prog Prob & Acad Dism	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Progress Subj Dism	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Prog STD & Acad Prob	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Academic & Progress STD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prog STD & Acad Dism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Progress Dismissal	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prog Dismissal & Acad STD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Academic & Progress Dism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Re-admitted STD	0.4%	1.2%	0.9%	0.6%	0.8%	1.3%	0.9%
Table Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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Tables 5 & 6 reveal that gender has an additional impact on academic standing. For most academic categories, males have a higher proportion of academic difficulty than do females. However, females tend to show greater difficulty in the progress categories.

Table 5: Gender (by count)

	Gender				
	Female	Male	Non-respondent	Did not Attend Fall 2002	Total
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Academic Probation	239	309	0	38	586
Academic Subj to Dism	186	230	0	3	419
Academic Dismissal	71	97	0	2	170
Good Standing	4066	3105	0	434	7605
Met req/allowed to reg	5	8	0	18	31
No Standing < 12.0 units	1765	2984	1	747	5497
Progress Probation	89	80	0	27	196
Acad & Prog Probation	2	0	0	0	2
Prog Prob & Acad STD	2	5	0	1	8
Prog Prob & Acad Dism	2	0	0	0	2
Progress Subj Dism	36	25	0	2	63
Prog STD & Acad Prob	3	5	0	0	8
Academic & Progress STD	2	3	0	0	5
Prog STD & Acad Dism	2	1	0	1	4
Progress Dismissal	2	4	0	0	6
Prog Dismissal & Acad STD	0	1	0	0	1
Academic & Progress Dism	1	1	0	0	2
Re-admitted STD	49	67	0	17	133
Table Total	6522	6925	1	1290	14738

Table 6: Gender (by percentage)

	Gender				
	Female	Male	Non-respondent	Did not Attend Fall 2002	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Academic Probation	3.7%	4.5%	0.0%	2.9%	4.0%
Academic Subj to Dism	2.9%	3.3%	0.0%	0.2%	2.8%
Academic Dismissal	1.1%	1.4%	0.0%	0.2%	1.2%
Good Standing	62.3%	44.8%	0.0%	33.6%	51.6%
Met req/allowed to reg	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	1.4%	0.2%
No Standing < 12.0 units	27.1%	43.1%	100.0%	57.9%	37.3%
Progress Probation	1.4%	1.2%	0.0%	2.1%	1.3%
Acad & Prog Probation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prog Prob & Acad STD	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Prog Prob & Acad Dism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Progress Subj Dism	0.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%
Prog STD & Acad Prob	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Academic & Progress STD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prog STD & Acad Dism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Progress Dismissal	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prog Dismissal & Acad STD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Academic & Progress Dism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Re-admitted STD	0.8%	1.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.9%
Table Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Impact of Workshops on Retention and Success

Retention and success were compared for three groups: students who attended academic workshops (184 students in 439 sections); students on probation and students subject to dismissal (STD) in the same 439 sections who did not attend workshops (1253); and the remaining students who attended the same 439 sections (8287). Refer to the Methods section for formulas.

Table 7: Retention and Success

	Workshop Attendees N=184	Probation and STD N=1253	All Pertinent Sections N=8287
Retention	81.8%	81.3%	89.3%
Success	50.0%	39.6%	67.8%

The workshop attendees achieved higher retention and success rates than students on probation and STD. The differences are most striking for success rates. Workshop attendees had a success rate greater than eleven percent higher than STD and students on probation who did not complete the workshop (11.4%). (Probation students were combined from Academic Probation, Progress Probation, and Academic & Progress Probation. STD students were combined from Academic-Subject to Dismissal, Progress Probation & Academic-Subject to Dismissal, Progress-Subject to Dismissal, Progress-Subject to Dismissal & Academic Probation, and Progress-Subject to Dismissal Academic-Subject to Dismissal.)

Conclusions

This report represents the first of three segments designed to study students in academic difficulty as well as the procedures used to assist them. The systems recently enacted were desperately needed in order to better understand, as well as to help, students in academic difficulty. The expanded database categories will be invaluable in both studying and assisting these students. Likewise, the academic workshops not only introduce much needed resources into the lives of students, but also bring the college into compliance with regulations.

This report showed the disproportionate impact of ethnicity and gender on academic standing. Non-white students had higher proportions in most standings of academic difficulty. Males experienced higher percentages in academic probation and dismissal, while females had higher percentages in progress probation and dismissal. This information can be useful to the College in its attempts to maximize the effects of its policies on the populations in greatest need of help.

The academic workshops were shown to be related to higher retention and success rates when compared to students on probation and subject to dismissal (STD) who did not attend workshops. This is an important measure of the efficacy of the intervention. In addition, this information may help the College in its attempts to be more proactive rather than wait until the student is STD to require workshops.

The data indicate that the interventions and policies are effective. However, further research is required to learn more about the interventions and to what degree they are successful in helping students who have demonstrated academic difficulty. Many of these issues will be addressed in upcoming segments two and three. In segment two, students will be interviewed for their experiences and attitudes toward the system, including notification and intervention procedures. In segment three, the development of the tracking system will allow administrators to learn more about the students in academic difficulty, such as where they were, what happened to them, and ideally, where they might be headed. In addition, the tracking system will illuminate processes that have resulted in difficulties in interpreting the data, especially regarding the continuity of reporting across semesters.

Recommendations

Several implications have emerged from the first segment of this study through consultation with the Director of Matriculation, Dr. Chelley Maple. The current recommendations center on demographics and data gathering procedures, and will most certainly be augmented by the completion of entire project. Segments two and three will result in suggestions gleaned directly from students, as well as recommendations informed by the new tracking system.

The College should consider requiring the workshop or other intervention for all students on probation. Retention and success were substantially higher for students on probation who attended workshop. At this time, the Academic CPR Workshops are required only for STD students.

The College should focus resources on students at highest risk. African Americans and Latinos tend to have higher proportions in all major categories of academic and progress difficulty. In addition, male students have a higher proportion of academic difficulty, while female students have a higher proportion of progress difficulty.

The College should add a field to Datatel for the actual date of the workshop (or the other reasons for change in standing), or standardize the data entry in the field currently used. The field "sts.acad.standing.date" contains the actual date that the information was posted to the student's records, but not the date of the workshop. The date is usually entered in "sts.override.reason" along with the reason for the override, but it is a time consuming process to pull them from this field. An easier workaround would be to require clerks to use a standard procedure for entering a date. Beginning the date with a standard symbol would help in pulling data from this field. For example: #03/21/03.

Finally, ensure that the College is receiving full FTES (full-time equivalent student) for the workshops and other interventions, where applicable. For example, calculate positive-attendance hours in the same manner as student orientation and the TLC lab, if appropriate.

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